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## Foreword

It is an honour for me to commend this first official publication of the new *Child, Youth and Mission (CYM) Study Group* within the framework of The International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS). I was introduced to the IAMS by my good friend Dr Valentin Kozhuharov whom I first met at the *Now and Next Theological Conference on Children* in Nairobi, Kenya in 2011. It was his idea to create the new CYM Study Group within IAMS in keeping with its objectives to promote the scholarly study of biblical and practical questions relating to mission and intercultural theology.

Children and youth have not often been featured in discussions relating to mission and intercultural theology, so the topics and perspectives presented in the CYM Study Group at the 2016 IAMS assembly in South Korea and the resulting papers gathered herein constitute a new and important area of study for many in the IAMS community. All the authors of these papers have experience in biblical and philosophical-theological reflection on children as well as extensive backgrounds in both ministry *to, for* and *with* children and youths in various contexts.

The brief given to potential authors was broad within the theme “Conversions and Transformations: Missiological Approaches to Religious Change.” The resulting papers reflect that breadth in their geographic, denominational, and issue perspectives. There are papers representing issues current in African, Middle Eastern, Australian and Latin American reflections; three papers present somewhat denominational views; others are rather more theological or philosophical; still others are issue based; one paper provides both historical and viewpoint background of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Lausanne Movements tracing recent perspectives on the child and social action in both. All present valuable insights and commentary on the condition, role and potential of children and youths in society and mission.

It is immensely satisfying to see this new Study Group take its place amongst the themes and subject matter priorities of the IAMS Study Groups. With IAMS being as inclusive and diverse as it is, this new area for study has an opportunity to reach many whose interests and attentions have not normally encompassed the third of the world’s population under the age of 25.

It is my hope that this volume will inaugurate new seasons and opportunities for contemplation and action in the coming years on behalf of children and youths.

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**August, 2017**

## Introduction

This book is the result of research and reflections done by eleven authors who, generally speaking, work in the field of children, youth and the Church in its work and mission with the young generation of every country in the world. It is the result of a conference where these eleven papers were presented and then reviewed and made into book chapters. The conference took place in August 2016 in Seoul and was organised by the *International Association for Mission Studies* (IAMS). In order for the reader to better understand the themes and topics of the presented articles in this volume, I think it is useful if I briefly give the background of work done behind the publication of the book. This background refers to IAMS and its study groups and to the contents of the papers.

**I.** The *International Association for Mission Studies* (<http://missionstudies.org/>) is an international, interconfessional and interdisciplinary professional society for the scholarly study of Christian witness and its impact in the world and the related field of intercultural theology. The objectives of the association are to promote the scholarly study of systematic, biblical, historical and practical questions relating to mission and intercultural theology; to disseminate information concerning mission studies to all those engaged in that and related study fields; to promote fellowship, cooperation and mutual assistance in mission studies; to organise international conferences of missiologists and intercultural theologians; to encourage the creation of centres of research; and to stimulate publications in missiology and intercultural theology. The publication of this book directly refers to the last-mentioned objective of the Association.

IAMS study groups are scholarly units that convene missiologists and theologians working in the same (or similar) area of research and wanting to give it more missiological and societal shape, while forming a specific scholarly track called a study group. Over the years, IAMS has seen the birth and the development of different study groups, such as Biblical studies and mission, Documentation, archives and oral history and mission, Healing and pneumatology, Gender and mission, etc. Some groups “survived” only for a short period of time (a decade, at most); these are such research tracks as Migration and mission, Environment and mission, World Christianity, etc. Some have continued to develop for two or more decades.

Bearing in mind this scholarly development within IAMS, two theologians and scholars working in the field of children, youth and mission (Dan Brewster and Valentin Kozhuharov) felt that the issue of child, Church and mission was missing within the IAMS fields of study, and in 2015 decided to start a new IAMS

study group – that of *Children, Youth and Mission* (CYM). This was initiated with the expectation that this new scholarly track would be a long-lasting research area within IAMS and will not cease to exist in the near future; a warrant for this is the inclusion into the group of theologians and scholars belonging to different organisations, institutions and networks that in one way or another deal with children and youth, such as the *Child theology movement*, the *Four-fourteen window global initiative*, the *Holistic child development global alliance*, *Compassion International*, etc. Each theologian devoted much time and effort to the work of the study group and made their way to Seoul where the papers were presented.

The publication of this book is not the end of these efforts and cooperation between the different scholars but the beginning: disseminating the papers as printed in the book will give us some feedback and prepare us for the CYM's group next participation of the IAMS conference in 2020 in Sydney where the main theme will be "Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: mission in a wounded world." What better theme we could want from a conference than this? Who suffers more from powers and inequalities than children? Who is as vulnerable and wounded as children are? It is not only the children in the Majority World that suffer and are wounded but all children throughout the globe: both rich and poor, boys and girls, small or adolescent, urban and countryside, "smart" and "retarded," healthy and disabled. The above-mentioned different child-related organisations whose representatives comprise the CYM study group will suitably contribute to the more profound development of CYM, and we are hopeful that this book will be followed by other publications and other scholarly events.

**II.** When compiling the book, the editors found it difficult to meaningfully distribute its contents among the different themes and topics found in the eleven articles. Each paper is unique, and the subject matter of each article considerably differs from the other. And yet we had to somehow present them in the book in a way that would focus the reader's attention on one main subject characteristic of two or three or more papers. And we ultimately came up with the four parts of the book where each part includes papers relating to similar subject matters. This distribution is quite relative and conditional, and we could think of an article as belonging to at least two parts of the book. But we had to choose what structure of the book we wanted to present to the reader, and this is how we came up with the four parts: regional, denominational, social and theological perspectives on the issues of children, youth and mission.

If I am to briefly summarise what the main themes and topics of each article are, I can point to the following.

## **1. Regional**

**A.** In Part One we presented three papers dealing with some regional issues in children, youth and mission: that of Africa and the Middle East. In Chapter One, **Arthur Brown** considers the topic of "The Millennial Generation and the MENA Uprisings: Relationships and New Spaces in the Emerging Middle East." The author asserts that the historical revolutions and counter-revolutions observed in the MENA region (for the abbreviation explained see the article) and the role that youth played in them have changed not only the politics of the region and

the world, but also the place of youth in MENA society. It is important that we ask questions about how the church and the theological educational institutions might respond to the lessons being learnt both through the twin lenses of generational characteristics of the MENA youth and the region's political economy.

The paper argues that certain “generational characteristics” within what is referred to as the “millennial generation” played a central part in empowering and equipping the youth to play such a significant role in what took place on the streets of cities across the region. These characteristics focus on social involvement, on what is creative and what provocative, on youth unemployment, on urbanisation and on the fact that the MENA youth of today is much better educated than their parents and grandparents and, on the other hand, they experience a delayed adulthood.

As for the church's responsibility, the author asserts that many within the millennial generation are disillusioned with institutions and their hierarchical structures and that young people are leaving churches (as they are leaving the mosques, too) as these institutions have not welcomed them in as creators and participants, but rather, as passive observers who need “entertaining”. If the youth are leaving the church, what hope do we have of attracting a new generation into our midst, asks Brown. He offers three possible solutions: a) the church needs to have a big vision for its role in society and invite young and old to join in with that vision; it needs to acknowledge the potential of young people's faith and their desire to see faith as a catalyst for social and structural change, and not be fearful of the change that it may bring; b) the church must also be willing to take risks with young people and step out towards the wider community to which it has been called to witness, harnessing creativity and trying new things – with the potential that such ventures may fail – but in the hope that new life will be created in and beyond the structures of the church; as young people become leaders in their faith communities, they will take what they learn into wider social and political life and continue the work of transforming nations; and c) the church needs to intentionally integrate the diverse disciplines of the social sciences into the theological curriculum if they are to equip emerging leaders for our churches – and communities – to play an active role in the future of the MENA region. Theological reflection on social, economic and political realities must therefore become a central component of what we teach and research.

**B.** In Chapter Two we read about the “African Millennials and Missional Diaconate as Transformational Development to God's glory,” as presented by **Johannes J. Knoetze**. At the very beginning the author makes it clear what the research question is: What are the unique challenges of the African millennials to the development debate, and how can missional diaconate as transformational development make a positive contribution to the development of Africa, and more especially to the lives of the African millennials?

Thus, the paper argues the importance of missional diaconate as transformational development of children and youth in Africa, with a focus on the millennial generation, and yet it points out that some clarification from a spiritual and theological perspective is needed. In an attempt to provide a theological rationale for the transformational development for children and youths in

Africa, the author tries to contribute to the dialogue between development and diaconia, regime and religion and children and youths and adults from an African perspective. Two contexts are important here: the socio-economic and the spiritual. The first considers the so-called “silent generation” in Africa who are to be known as the colonised generation; then comes the baby boomer generation (1946-1964) in Africa that started their fight against colonialism, and where the African millennials are in many instances the first “free born” generation in the continent after colonisation. And yet, in many instances the African millennials do not see themselves as “free born” because they are still struggling with the negative consequences of colonialism while also enjoying some positive consequences; next comes the fact that in many countries the millennials are viewed as “digital natives,” because they do not know a world without computers, but it is not true of many African millennials, especially in rural areas; and, finally, the social context would not be fully presented if the different faces and experiences of poverty were not properly considered.

Speaking of the spiritual context, Knoetze affirms that there are no “pure” forms of spirituality, that great differences exist amongst them, that they are all in flux, and that real life is characterised by a vast field of transitions, amalgamations and overlaps. Many African millennials find themselves caught up in traditional beliefs through rites of passage that older generations expect them to perform, especially in sickness, child birth, initiation, marriage, death, etc. In the lives of many millennial Africans it is assumed that Christianity cannot be true because of their cultural experience or belief that Western culture, which is directly related to colonialism and is based on Christianity, is unjust and corrupt.

In spite of the complex socio-economic and spiritual context of African millennials, they are very active in the church, the author asserts. The question that needs to be answered is: how can they be incorporated into missional diaconate through transformational development to glorify God? Missional diaconate is understood as “The saving deeds of the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which are seen in the gratitude of the church in different deeds of diaconia, with a missional focus on the need of all people in all circumstances” (see quotation in the article). Important here are the notions of Trinity and the deeds of diaconia. Missional diaconate is embedded in the Trinity, it is the theological activity from the Kingdom of God that confronts the “other kingdom” which “breeds poverty, destitution, injustice, tears, hard-heartedness, iniquity, discord and war, intolerance and persecution”. Missional diaconia is understood as the gratitude of the church, and one of the most fundamental deeds of missional diaconia is not to *do* but to *be* church amongst the African millennials. *Being* church as representative of God is a “hermeneutical” function as well as an “agogic community”.

The article further considers transformation and development while noting that “development” is a very loaded term which within the context of Africa may have some negative connotations. Development is also closely linked to material change or social change in the material world, which is of great importance to the millennials. In some instances, people are only interested in development when it is “having more things”. This links development closely with Westernisation, modernisation, millennialisation, and secularism. It is the understanding of this

article that development is not only about having “more things” but about real transformation. It is also the understanding that transformation always includes spiritual transformation. This transformation spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches. On the other hand, “when we separate the spiritual from the physical, not only do we separate evangelism from development, but we separate gospel-as-word from the gospel-as-deed, and provide no home for gospel-as-sign.”

**C.** Chapter Three presents the reader with the topic of “The Conversion of Children in Africa: a Contextual Exploration,” as offered by another African theologian, **Johannes Malherbe**. At the very beginning, it becomes clear that his research deals mostly with vulnerable children (those in need, or sick, or with disabilities). The author has chosen for his contextual exploration three spheres of influence on the life of children and young people (that of education, revival and nurture) and gives examples by offering several case studies.

Speaking of education, Malherbe gives the example of two boys. He asserts that during the period of colonial rule in Africa, formal education was mostly provided by churches and mission agencies. For most of them the mission school was a key instrument to the conversion of the communities they served. It brought about radical and total change in the lives of millions of children. Oliver Tambo, for example, studied at a Methodist school, then Anglican school (being baptised again), then Catholic (for his secondary education). Thus, Oliver converted to Christianity (in a broad sense) through education. Another example is Denis who converted while studying in a Catholic school. “We chose to describe this change as conversion – because of its total nature, and because of the centrality of religious change in the whole process. The conversion process was gradual, institutional, total, and communal” (see quotation in the article).

In Africa, several revival Christian movements have been operating, and they had their impact on the lives of many people, including children and young people. The author gives the example of Surprise Sithole, a teenage boy who one night heard a loud voice commanding him to leave his parents’ house; this is how he met a very devoted Christian couple, and in conversations with them he one day suddenly converted to Jesus and decided to devote his life to Him only. Then Sithole became a zealous missionary and converted hundreds and thousands to Christianity. The article also gives the examples of Oliver Tambo (once again) and his sister Lydia: the latter was healed from a disease and firmly accepted Jesus while also becoming a Charismatic Christian and healer. The author notes that these three conversions followed from personal decisions.

As for the context of nurture, Malherbe gives the examples of two children, Selam and her brother Nahu, whose parents died and, after the two siblings struggled a lot, an Evangelical church (doing mission under *Compassion International*) received them and took care of the two poor children. Soon they became devoted Christians. Another example is the small girl Tsego who was very sick (being raped at the age of five or six) and who “found” her Christian family to take care of her; through care and nurture, she became a devoted Christian, too.

In his concluding notes, the author summarises his observations by affirming that in the context of education, conversion is a gradual, total, institutional, and communal process that was a deliberate goal and strategy for most Christian missions during the colonial period; in the context of revival, conversion is more personal, experiential, and usually takes place within movements of Christians seeking deeper intimacy with God. Childhood conversion also occurs where Christians engage vulnerable African children and young people. Because of the scope and severity of need, Christian nurture extends the traditional spheres of the extended family and the community. Responding primarily to physiological and emotional needs, it quite naturally creates opportunities for children to embrace Christian values, beliefs, and ways of living.

## 2. Denominational

A. Part Two of the book considers three papers that deal with the issues of conversion and transformation from the perspective of two Christian denominations, Baptist and Eastern Orthodox. Chapter Four presents the topic of “Training Next Generation Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Baptist Leaders for Mission,” offered by **Darren Cronshaw**. His focus is on the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) in the context of Australia. The author notes that in the last two decades the BUV leaders have expressed the need for help while dealing with differences with language and values their young people face, and for the ministry of helping new families settle and then reach out in mission beyond themselves.

In this, they face different challenges. An intrinsic challenge of second generation young people is that they bridge or navigate two cultural worlds. They decide whether to identify with their traditional culture of their family heritage, or the majority Western culture where they study and work, or their own second generation culture, or socially construct their identity between all three. Straddling between these worlds can challenge wellbeing and mental health, foster marginalisation, and lead youth to leave church and faith.

Language is another difficult challenge, especially among the young believers in the Chin and Karen churches (most of them coming from Myanmar). While quoting a Chin Baptist church pastor, Cronshaw notes: “We have to prepare and plant now and recruit our young children to be qualified in the church in English as well as one or two dialects. We need bilingual leadership for Chin people. Otherwise we will lose many of our children and they won’t have a church to go to in the future” (see quotation in the article).

Churches can be differentiated between those that focus on linguistic/cultural maintenance and those focused on communicating the gospel; it is suggested that the latter are more positive about the future. There are also “medium” focused groups that offer youth programs in community languages for cultural preservation, even if the language capabilities of second generation youth is limited, but “message” focused churches offer programs in English when convenient.

In Langmead’s words, the author sees the cultural and linguistic challenges in this way: “If the churches in the ‘receiving’ country catch the vision of mission as hospitality, strangers will become guests, and then hosts. Those

without defenders in their old country will have advocates in the new. Those on the margins will, at least in faith communities, become ‘insiders’ ‘at home’. Our welcome will in some way reflect God’s abundant welcome. We should not underestimate how countercultural this vision is, or how challenging it is to live out in a fearful and often selfish society” (see quotation in the article). He sees the needs of developing a “diaspora missiology” which seeks to develop three directions of mission: “to” diaspora people who come to us; “through” them to reach their own people, whether here or back in their home countries; and “by and beyond” them as we encourage them to engage in cross-cultural mission, as “bridge peoples.”

**B. Meewon Yang’s** paper smoothly connects with the previous one: she again focuses on the BUV but her point of consideration is on “The Impact of Multicultural Church Models.” This paper examines four models of multicultural church drawing on case studies from the BUV, and it also explores how the models function, change, and develop. Yang considers the different ways in which multicultural churches respond to the challenges of cultural diversity, and especially the transition from first to second and third generation migrant communities. The research considers the needs of next generation migrant children and young people, whose primary culture and language are different from that of their parents, and it discusses how each of the four models caters for such different needs. Yang also considers the importance of gospel principles of hospitality and inclusion while also highlighting some of the complex issues relating to intercultural encounter; the heart of being a multicultural church is the vocation of hospitality to the stranger.

Briefly, the four models are: a) the monocultural model (“biological family”): migrant communities form separate churches reflecting individual language, ethnicity and cultural groups; b) the friendship model (“shared house”): these are congregations having some kind of cross-cultural relationship with another congregation; c) the partnership model (“intercultural engagement”): two separate congregations live their life in Jesus and yet they envision a future together (mostly through such structures as Sunday school and youth groups); and d) the integrated model (“blended family”): these are congregations made up of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, including those of the majority Anglo-Australian culture. The author extensively deals with the strengths and the weaknesses of each model and clearly shows where these can occur and how the weaknesses can be overcome.

The paper suggests that the way forward for the transformation of migrant ethnic churches can include mutual learning, intercultural communication, education in the meaning of multicultural worship, sharing of resources, addressing power imbalances, listening to the voices of diverse cultures and generations, and developing multicultural and next generation leadership.

In conclusion, Yang affirms that churches in all the models are on the journey to an understanding of becoming multicultural, although this can mean at least three different things: a) a plurality of monocultures; (b) a healthy interaction between essentially different cultures; and c) a spectrum of intercultural experiences between first and third generation migrants. Each



congregation must be challenged by the gospel message of inclusion and diversity, such as in Paul's Epistles where he talks about diverse responses to idolatry and not diversity of cultures. Becoming a multicultural church requires flexibility and openness to growth, cultural intelligence and transformation mindful of the mission of God.

**C. Valentin Kozhuharov** presents an Eastern Orthodox perspective on the issue of conversion and transformation. In his "Eastern Orthodox Christian Understanding of Children and Young People's Conversion to Christianity," he focusses on conversion as seen in two different ways: as an instant act of firm belief in Jesus and a decision to always follow Him, and as a process over time which can be equalled to faith growth and a growing commitment to Christ and His Church; between them, the author notes, are various types of "conversion" understood mostly in terms of commitment over shorter or longer periods of time. The Orthodox churches hold the opinion that conversion is a process of acquiring Christ-like life; it is seen in terms of belonging to His Church and to the community of faith where the believers must practise so called "church discipline;" this would ultimately make them more and more Christ's (that is, belonging to Christ), more and more "converted".

Orthodox believers in Jesus Christ don't feel they "turn" or are illuminated by a sudden change of thoughts, heart and will: they would most often think of whether they are in Christ or not. That is, for them not the sudden move but a continuous relationship with Jesus is important; not a sudden change but a process characterises their belief in Christ and their life in Him. This is because the believers don't grasp their "conversion" apart from their understanding and practice of the faith, the Church, the Scripture, the liturgy and the whole complex of ecclesiastical discipline. For us to better understand how Eastern Orthodox Christians "practise" their conversion, the author offers four "connections": conversion and faith; conversion and the Church; conversion and the bible; and conversion and liturgical life.

When exploring the issue of conversion and children, Kozhuharov insists that the key word here is (ecclesiastical) "discipline"; this means regularly coming to church and taking part in the services, regularly saying one's prayers, repenting, confessing sins in front of a priest (representing Christ), keeping all fasting periods (some 220 days – or more – in a year), regularly taking Holy Communion and with their families taking part in the numerous Orthodox rituals and practices, such as sanctification of water, services and prayers for the dead, icon veneration, blessings of objects, people, homes, businesses, etc.; children must also take part in the sacraments of the Church.

Children, too, need to keep to the prescripts of the Church concerning life in Jesus through living a "liturgical life" seen as "liturgy after the liturgy." In the Orthodox churches, they are not treated any differently from the adults, there are no special children's services or children's sermons, or any other separate activity: children equally must acquire the faith and the life in Jesus. Unlike adults, however, children are considered "chosen" ones: they are members of the Body of Christ because Jesus chose them and confirmed that the Kingdom belongs to them; more than that, adults must "convert" and become like

children. Although the Kingdom is considered as an inheritance and belonging, it needs to be “gained” – through faith in Jesus Christ and by following Him – when the child leaves childhood, and he or she must consciously choose to stay with Christ Who has already been in the child as an Image.

“Conversion” cannot be separated from “becoming”, meaning not only becoming like a child but also “becoming Christ’s,” that is, belonging to Christ. To the children, the Kingdom belongs by grace but only until the time they reach the age of discretion: after that, such an inheritance must be appreciated and understood and then appropriated and enjoyed.

### 3. Social

**A.** In Part Three we included three papers dealing with children and young people in different social context and playing different roles in society, especially as they are vulnerable in one way or another. **Greg Burch’s** paper focuses on the “Protective and Participative Spectrum of Care for Vulnerable Children.” He has done extensive practical research in Latin America and his conclusions to a great extent are all-embracing. The article asserts that we need to recognise children not only as social actors able to engage in the development and transformation of society, community and their own lives, but also as individuals who must be protected and cared for within Christian engagement. Protection of children is a must in today’s world, the author insists, but, on the other hand, by virtue of their supposed need for “protection” against risk, children are not being permitted (or less and less so) to make choices and take risks. Protection is critical, over-protection is harmful, he affirms. Over-protection is often referred to as paternalism. Paternalism snuffs out the voice of children and youth in society by sending subtle messaging that relays a false sense of security for children in difficult situations.

From his Latin American experience, Burch considers two forms of protection and participation: *assistencialismo*, which is a form of over-protection undercutting participation by creating dependency on social agencies and adults in leadership. The practice of dependency and *assistencialismo* is detrimental to creating space for the God-given capacities that young people have. On the other hand, *protagonismo infantil* has become a prominent term in Latin American childhood discourse; the term specifically implies the need for adults (and their institutions) to respect and support children as equal and essential partners in the organising of their lives.

There are certain components that significantly contribute to *protagonismo infantil*: participation, representation, projection, solidarity, self-reflection or identity, autonomy and continuity. While *protagonismo infantil* is similar to child participation, *protagonismo* is identified as a way of life. Children and adolescents are seen not as dependent beings but as autonomous agents. They can and should act on their own behalf. The paper insists on the following: children and adolescents must have an active role in society, they themselves, and not adults, should defend children’s rights; advocacy must be universal and be in favour of all children; children are teachers – not just for their peers, but for all people.

The implications of the child-centred model are that adults (and the

institutions founded by them) should respect the rights of children to speak into issues that affect both themselves and society in general. This is understood as a bottom-up approach where children are highly involved in the process. Instead of looking at children as objects of mission, we now view them as subjects and highly involved in most processes. Then come child agency, dialogical relationships, human rights engagement, transformation, children as mission actors.

Both of these distinct modes (protection and participation), if converged, provide beneficial components that unite into an integrated ministry engagement that reveals the means for further intervention. This has been coined the *child-centred model*. No longer must these modes be perceived as creating a divergence of practices, but rather a convergence of theological and social ideas committed to restoring broken ties between children and their communities.

**B.** Chapter Eight introduces the reader to “Welcoming Some of *The Least of These*: LGBTI Youth Through Our *Own* Conversion,” as offered by **Glenn Miles**. There is certain controversy, in dealing with the issue of young LGBTI people, and the amount of dialogue on this one issue has been enormous, the author insists. Biblical scholars have argued both sides of the issue, some citing that the Bible condemns it and others citing that it condones it. But even those who believe that the Bible does provide enough evidence to say that homosexuality is wrong, also encourage the church to engage with the LGBTI community, rather than turning them away. Others who believe in a more inclusive theology have encouraged the church to provide a “generous spaciousness” to include them. For some leaders in the church, their stance to support the LGBTI community has led to them being described, at best, as deviating from Scripture and, at worst, as heretics.

The challenge with rejecting membership or ignoring the issue is that LGBT children whose parents are members of non-LGBT affirming churches often feel rejected by their families and religious communities from the outset. When LGBT youth are part of the church, just like youth of any sexuality, they need “instructing in the ways of the Lord” (Prov. 22:6). If children feel unwelcome in the church, then they will seek support and love elsewhere, wherever they can find it. Only when we welcome young people into the church, do we have the right to speak into their lives and challenge them. However, when we do, we had better be sure that what we speak into their lives is leading them into truth, Miles asserts.

The often-used adage “Hate the sin, love the sinner” is unhelpful to people who are gay. In spite of what may be meant by this, what they hear is “hate the sin, hate the sinner”. Gay people consider that they are oriented to their sexuality in the same way that straight people are oriented to theirs. They, therefore, feel that you cannot condemn the sin without also condemning the sinner.

Another unhelpful question posed to a young gay person is the question, “Are you a practising homosexual?” Once again, is this making their acceptance conditional on whether they act out their sexual feelings? Do we ask if heterosexual youth are “practising heterosexuals”, even though they may well be in a sexual relationship or relationships?

Then the author gives the scriptural example of the Ethiopian eunuch in the Acts of the Apostles, who was baptised and who was one of the first people to become a Christian. Typical of Jesus’ upside-down kingdom (the first will be

last and the last will be first), the Ethiopian eunuch was both an African and a transgender. It says nothing about what happens to him after his baptism except that he became a disciple. After giving advice on marriage and divorce, Jesus talks about eunuchs, He says that some were born that way, others were made that way, and some chose to live that way for the sake of the Kingdom.

The issue of young LGBTI people is especially important when we think of the church and the ways in which it can be welcoming. Miles points to the following characteristics of an inclusive church: a) a church (perhaps not dissimilar to yours) with a strong emphasis on biblical values; b) a church in which everyone is welcome; male, female, gays, lesbians and youth with bisexual feelings or transgender would be welcome; c) a church where there would be discussion in youth groups about the dangers of men and women using heterosexual or homosexual pornography; and d) counselling and support would be provided for all those suffering the consequences of unfaithfulness outside of loving relationships.

**C.** In Chapter Nine we are offered the topic of “2015 Lausanne Statement on Children-at-Risk: An Integral Mission Response to the Cape Town Commitment Mandate to Take Children Seriously in Mission” by **Susan Greener**. The focus is on children-at-risk and the way the Lausanne Movement dealt with this important issue. To better understand the Movement’s stance, Greener offers a brief review of Lausanne and its mission statements: the Lausanne Covenant of 1974; the Manila Manifesto of 1989; the Cape Town Commitment of 2010; and Lausanne and the *missio Dei*: Children as Unifiers. This naturally leads to the Lausanne Statement on children-at-risk (LSCAR) – the main thesis of the article. In dealing with the Lausanne document, Greener offers three perspectives on our work with such children: a) having/obtaining a high view of children; b) our call to repentance; and c) our call to action.

The author affirms that communicating and gaining endorsement of the Lausanne statement on children-at-risk intends to be an advocacy effort to educate, unify and mobilise the global church to take action on children-at-risk and mission. The movement desires broad support of the declaration as a rallying tool to mobilise the (evangelical) church to take children seriously in mission through theologically informed practices that address the gross injustices and abuses that children face while respecting their importance for Kingdom work and vitality. Lausanne offers a strong affirmation of children’s firm placement in God’s mission: that children can be called by God and hear His voice, and actively engage in worship and service to God. To support children’s co-participation, adults have responsibility for their holistic nurture throughout childhood, and are called to respect, listen to, envision, and empower children as vulnerable agents of God’s mission.

A key theme in the LSCAR is that mission is **to** children (ie, targets of evangelism and discipleship) and at times **for** them (ie, advocacy, child protection), but rarely **with** them. The call to repent uses this framework to highlight omissions, failures, and areas of necessary response for the church. Christians have failed to act **for** children, Greener asserts. An admonition to include the voices of children-at-risk in mission **for** children is included in the Lausanne statement,

a reminder to move away from adult-centric defaults; forgiveness is asked for mission efforts that have undervalued children as co-labourers **with** adults in the *missio Dei* by offering a shallow gospel that fails to address the suffering of children or to empower them to evangelise and serve in ways suitable to their developing capacities.

The **to**, **for**, and **with** theme continues to provide the framework for an invitation to take action that is extended to families, churches, denominations, mission organisations, non-governmental organisations, schools, and individuals. Mission **to** children means supporting them and their families for holistic, healthy and abundant living, including introducing them to the gospel of Jesus in meaningful ways. Mission **for** children involves shielding them from harm from abusers, exploiters, and broken systems. Mission **with** children welcomes them as full church and mission members, empowered in ways that respect their changing and developing capacities.

#### 4. Theological

**A.** Part Four offers deep theological reflections on the role and importance of children in the eyes of the loving God. We deliberately left the last two articles to conclude the book as their views in fact embrace the considerations of all the previous papers in a profound theological way. **D.J. Konz's** interest is in "Karl Barth's theological anthropology and the re-subjectification of the child." Objectification occurs when the child is overly distinguished from the adult with the result that he or she is in danger of being regarded as an object, an instrument, or an "It", rather than a fully subjective "Thou". By "re-subjectifying" children and others, Konz argues, the Church re-subjectifies and indeed re-*humanises* itself and its missional activity, thereby bringing the Church into greater correspondence with God's own gracious, divine *missio* in Jesus Christ and the Spirit.

The article draws on propositions from the theological anthropology of Karl Barth to counter these tendencies and to "re-subjectivise" the child not as an "it", or a being that is unsurpassably Other to the adult (for the capitalisation of the words see the note in the article), but as a human subject before God in Christ, and as a subject which therefore lives with all human beings in movement toward mutual co-humanity. This re-subjectivising of a child is necessary, in turn, for re-humanising the Church's mission, as the Christian community seeks to witness by word and work in concert with the divine *missio* in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christian agencies risk objectifying children when children are used as a means of fundraising for mission, the author reminds us, but this is also true when children are viewed as targets or "objects" of mission, as well as means for "reaching" other members of their families or communities, and perhaps especially when targeted and recruited as "agents of mission" toward lofty sounding mission goals such as "global transformation".

Barth's broader, christologically conceived theological anthropology presented in *Church Dogmatics* III/2 has considerable relevance to the problem of child objectification, and offers resources for "re-subjectifying" the child. The particular aspect of Barth's theological anthropology most promising in this

regard is his treatment of the inter-subjective (i.e., one subject in relation to another subject) *I-Thou* relation. It has been maintained that the other person – whether child, Muslim, “unreached” – is re-subjectified when I and the Christian witnessing community make time and space and effort to encounter the individual *Thou* not merely as a means to our ends, or an object of our mission intentions, but rather as one whose being and flourishing is absolutely essential to our own humanity. Just as re-subjectifying the *Thou* of the child re-subjectifies me, and humanises me, too, re-subjectifying children in relation to the Church’s mission humanises the Church, as well.

When the Church objectifies the child, however, even in the name of mission, it places the being, creaturely dignity and human flourishing of the child at risk, diminishes its own humanity, and becomes indistinguishable from the World; in sum, in doing so, Christians risk becoming inhuman and out of step with the mission of the divine Subject who re-subjectifies humanity in Jesus Christ. In a geo-political era in which reactionary nativism and nationalism are energetically objectifying and scapegoating the alien and stranger, it is urgent that the Church stand apart from the human tendency to objectify others, whether children, immigrants or “unreached”. Barth’s theological anthropology – particularly his reflections on the *I-Thou* relation – issues both a challenge and a potential path to re-subjectifying the child and all human persons in the Church’s missional witness to Jesus Christ. Re-subjectifying the child and others in turn means, thereby, standing in closer correspondence to the mission of God Himself in the world. That is, to the divine outreaching of the God who is in God’s own eternal being both I and Thou, and, in Jesus Christ, the “I am” who says to the child, “Thou art!”

**B.** The book concludes with **Keith White’s** “The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Transformation of Children and Young People.” In a profound way and manner, the author considers an unexpected (as we will see in his paper) view on the child from the perspective of God and more specifically of the Holy Spirit, as this has been eloquently developed by James Loder and then succinctly summarised and “explained” by White. Theologically and missiologically, the Holy Spirit is seen as the prime mover and sustainer of Christian mission and yet this is rarely examined as it affects a “normal human being” in their lifetime. What if a lifetime represents and reflects the work of God’s Spirit? Unless this is acknowledged, a default position of many Christian individuals, churches and organisations is to assume that transformation is largely a matter of human commitment, planning and resources, laced with prayer for God’s blessing on the human endeavour.

Focusing on understandings of child development takes us beyond a simple description and categorisation of stages of growth, in order to ask why it is that humans develop at all rather than settle for a comfortable stage somewhere along the way, White asserts. Words are not readily available for this task, this is why we follow James Loder in seeking to understand the “spirit” of a child, and how this relates to the Holy Spirit. Unless God’s Holy Spirit is given the rightful thanks and praise for His work in and through each human being and throughout history, there will also be the tendency and temptation to ascribe “development” to human agency.

The author then briefly presents Loder's view when he argues that every human life is connected with, and reflective of, God's Spirit. God, through His Spirit, has crafted humankind in such a way that there is time and again through a lifetime openness to the continuing work of God's Spirit. Often child development is seen as an enclosed process that involves the significant others that surround the child from birth, the agency of the child, and the geographical, social, economic, political and material world of the child. All things being equal, a child is helped through a number of stages towards adulthood or maturity. The focus is on care and education that are aimed at the child reaching the next stage as quickly as possible. Loder, however, completely re-aligns and re-draws the standard map of child development. In place of the conventional and ubiquitous diagrams that show stages of progress from birth to adulthood, Loder presents a wholly new configuration of life set within "little infinity" and "big infinity." Life is investigated within the history of the whole of time and the vastness of the universe. What is normally charted as a line recording progress is now "a wandering in cosmic emptiness, or at best, a circumambulation of the human spirit around the centre who is the One triune God" (see quotation in the article).

Genuine transformation of the human spirit comes through God's grace, which is present and active throughout a person's life, whether recognised or not, White affirms. Loder argues that the key to transformation (growth/development) is not to be seen in defining and mapping the stages but within the heart or spirit of the individual human being. His focus is on the dynamics of development within and between the stages. When human beings, significant others seek to welcome, nurture, care for, teach, educate, convert, transform the child, it makes all the difference in the world if they know and respect the work that is already going on in the child's life, largely hidden and unrecognised. In our work with children, we will perhaps offer material success, status, fast routes to celebrity and adulthood, rather than being in touch with and in tune with the dynamics and logic of the spirit and the Spirit.

To conclude, it is my hope that this brief overview of the eleven articles will encourage the reader to take the time and effort to carefully read and study them and elicit every possible benefit from the work and research done by the authors. As mentioned above, it is also our hope (of the IAMS' CYM study group conveners, Valentin Kozhuharov and Johannes Knoetze) that this book is only the beginning of a much longer process of accumulating more research and practical reflections on children and youth in their relation to the Church and its mission, and that more theologians, missiologists and other scholars would want to join the study group and the authors working in this important field for the Church – the next generation and the hope of humanity, *the little ones*.

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